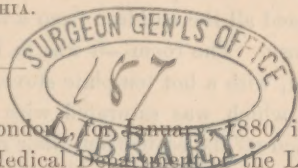


Atlee (W. F.)

[Extracted from the American Journal of the Medical Sciences for July, 1880.]

ON VACCINATION.

COMMUNICATED BY WALTER F. ATLEE, M.D.,
OF PHILADELPHIA.



IN the number of the *Practitioner* (London), for January, 1880, is an article by Henry Stevens, M.D., of the Medical Department of the Local Government Board, entitled "On the Supposed Deterioration of Humanized Vaccine Lymph in this Country, à propos of the question of 'Animal Vaccination.'" In this article Dr. Stevens says that he believes that he has examined more vaccinated children than any man alive or who ever lived. He finds no ground whatever for the suspicion that the present arm-to-arm lymph has lost its true and original Jennerian character. He denies it altogether. He says: "I can positively state that, examining dozens of recently vaccinated children every day of my life, and that during a long series of years, I find no ground whatever for the suspicion that the present arm-to-arm lymph has lost its true and original Jennerian character. I do not believe that our arm-to-arm lymph affords any less protection than it ever did." He says, moreover, that it was his duty to inquire into nearly all the complaints of the untoward results of vaccination, and can state most positively that he never found in any one single instance any ground whatever for these allegations against vaccination.

I wrote to my father, Dr. Atlee, of Lancaster, of these statements of Dr. Stevens, and in his answer he says: "I fully agree with Dr. Stevens that there has been no deterioration in the vaccine virus, nor in its effects, from the time of my experience with it, which has now been sixty-four years. While a student in 1818-19, the varioloid made its first appearance after the introduction of vaccination, and I was then extensively engaged in vaccination and re-vaccination. I studied the *disease* and its effects, so far as the pustule was concerned, with extreme care, and I *now* find no difference in its appearance or in its preservative effects from what they were at that time."

My father adds: "I have in almost all instances used the crust. Sometimes have punctured the vesicle and taken the lymph on glass. In a few, very few, instances among the thousands I have vaccinated, taken from arm to arm. But I never could perceive any difference, and I believe that one is no better than the other, each producing all the well-marked diagnostics of genuine vaccine pustule."

"I have tested the efficacy by inoculating for smallpox after vaccination; have taken patients after vaccination to cases of malignant smallpox in small and hot stove rooms, and exposed them to the foul atmosphere for fifteen or twenty minutes, secure from danger. In one case of a mother with six unvaccinated children, one at the breast, who had a severe attack of smallpox, as soon as I discovered the nature of the case, I vaccinated all the children from a vaccine-crust, and they all took the vaccine disease. The room—it was in February—was a small ten-by-twelve feet room, with a hot ten-plate stove, and but one bed, on which they all slept, and which was saturated with smallpox contagion; yet these children picked off the scabs from their mother's body, and the baby nursed at her breast, and no one took the smallpox. Had I time this morning I could multiply instances of a similar kind. I have the utmost confidence in the protective power of vaccination, and I feel very sure that the cases of failure are very much more attributable to the use of vitiated vaccine matter; to the ignorance of unprofessional persons as to the purity of the virus, who have practised vaccination; and, in my experience, to the carelessness of physicians themselves as to the condition of the patients vaccinated, when affected by hepatic or other eruptions, than to any inefficiency of genuine vaccination."

"I have been very careful myself, and have enjoined it upon my students and younger professional brethren, never to use a crust taken from an *unclean* child; nor, unless the extreme urgency of the case demanded it, to vaccinate a child affected by any eruption. It is the only way in which that foul disease, smallpox, can be exterminated."



